I. Introduction

1. The Expert Group, which was established in accordance with a recommendation by Committee III, met from 3-5 February 1964. Experts in the field of trade information from the following countries, nominated by their respective governments, participated in the meeting: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Federal Republic of Germany, India, Israel, Italy, Madagascar, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom and the United States. A list of the names of the experts participating in the meeting and of the observers is contained in Annex A to this document. Mr. Hans Mott, Sweden, was unanimously elected as Chairman of the Group.

2. The terms of reference of the Expert Group, agreed upon by Committee III, are as follows:

(i) to advise the CONTRACTING PARTIES on the most efficient means of establishing and operating an international trade information centre within the framework of GATT;

(ii) to indicate work which the international trade information centre should undertake on a priority basis;

(iii) to assess the financial implications of establishing and operating such a centre, account being taken of various alternative schemes;

(iv) to explore, taking into account specific proposals submitted by governments, other measures in the field of trade promotion and production and marketing techniques which the CONTRACTING PARTIES and individual countries could implement, to assist the less-developed countries in expanding their export earnings;

(v) to report on the above to the Committee (L/2080, paragraphs 60-62).
When drawing up the terms of reference, Committee III decided that in their work the experts shall take due account of the views of governments as summarized in document COM.III/115, particularly paragraph 25 of that document (also see COM.III/115/Add.1), and of the discussion in the Committee relating to the proposed establishment of trade information services and to possibilities for action in the GATT in regard to export promotion schemes and production and marketing techniques (paragraphs 37-59 of document L/2080).

4. To assist the Expert Group in its task, the secretariat had prepared a note (COM.III/126) setting out in summary form the main elements of the proposals and of the discussions in Committee III as they relate to the establishment of trade information services in the framework of GATT and to export promotion measures and marketing and production techniques. The secretariat note which also provides a listing of documents relevant for the deliberation of the Experts, is appended to this report in Annex B.

II. Findings and Recommendations of the Expert Group

5. Taking into account the discussion in Committee III, and of the explanations given by experts from less-developed countries during the course of the meeting, the Expert Group agreed to recommend that the CONTRACTING PARTIES establish trade information and trade promotion advisory services in the framework of GATT. The Group felt that problems existing in the field of trade information and trade promotion were inseparably linked. The objective of the trade information service would not be attained unless it could be ensured that the information thus made available would be utilized effectively.

6. The Group further agreed that, while bearing in mind the final objective of the original proposals which envisaged a centre which provides trade information services of a comprehensive nature, it would be desirable to establish a small service which could be expanded step by step, according to necessity. This approach would avoid a misdirection of efforts and resources.

---

ʃ For its deliberations, the Group also had before it the following documents which became available during the course of the meeting: Spec(64)21, Spec(64)23 and Spec(64)24.
7. The Group agreed that the services should be oriented towards meeting practical requirements. While recommending a number of practical steps which should be taken to establish the trade information and trade promotion advisory services on a sound basis, the Group felt that it would not be possible at this stage, to chart fully the best course of action for the future operations of the centre. The Group agreed, therefore that it would be useful if Committee III would consider to reconvene the Group, approximately six months after the centre had started to operate, with instructions to examine, in the light of the experience gained and further suggestions by governments, the type and direction of the services which would be most useful to exporters in less-developed countries and would make the most efficient use of resources. Provision might further be made for keeping the development of the centre under continuous review by experts. In this connexion, the hope was expressed that if the Group were to be reconvened, experts from other less-developed countries would also find it possible to participate in the meeting.

8. At the proposed future meeting, the Group would also be in a position to consider in more detail, the proposals which had been made, and those which might be submitted by governments, in regard to possible action in the GATT in the fields of export promotion generally and marketing and production techniques (see Section III of Annex B). As regards a suggestion by Israel that the Expert Group should investigate possibilities for the provision of export credit insurance by the industrialized countries for exports from less-developed countries (Annex B, para. 30), many experts felt that this was a highly technical subject which was only marginally related to their experience in the field of trade information and trade promotion. The Group agreed, therefore that it would be more useful if this matter were to be taken up by Committee III on the basis of more detailed proposals by Israel. Committee III could then decide on the manner most appropriate for dealing with the proposal.
9. More generally, the Group felt that it would be useful if the proposals relating to export promotion schemes and production and marketing techniques to be taken up by the Group, could be presented in a form which was as concrete as possible. The Group felt that it would be useful if the attention of contracting parties were again invited to the request contained in paragraph 40 of the last report of Committee III (L/2080) to supply the Committee with papers setting out their experiences and difficulties in the field of production for exports and marketing techniques, analogous to the paper submitted by Sweden (COM.III/122) on a basis of a survey of the experiences of Swedish traders organizations in this regard.

10. The Group agreed that while it was envisaged that most of the proposals relating specifically to export promotion measures would only be taken up at the next meeting, the centre should, nevertheless, start to provide from the outset, certain trade promotion advisory services. Apart from making available on request, information on specific questions, the centre would explore and, to the extent possible, provide and arrange for training in export promotion and export promotion techniques. In this connexion, the centre should investigate the possibilities for providing, in the framework of the in-service training programme of GATT, for officials from less-developed countries, a course which would cover more than hitherto, subjects in the field of trade promotion which are of special significance for exporters in less-developed countries. Similarly, stress might be laid on the study of trade promotion aspects in the study tour which forms part of the training programme. Moreover, the Group agreed that it would be useful if the centre would prepare and publish a manual setting out efficient means for establishing and operating trade promotion services. To assist the centre in preparing this manual, governments which have experience in providing such services should be invited to collaborate with the secretariat.
11. As regards the establishment of the centre, the Group recommended that, pending the further examination of this matter at the next meeting of the Group, the following practical steps should be taken:

(i) provision should be made to enable the centre to act as a clearing house for: (a) the exchange of documentation and information on trade barriers and commercial policy measures generally; and (b) the exchange of documentation and possibly market research studies available through national trade promotion services.

To enable the centre to fulfil this function, governments should be invited to make available to the centre all relevant information on trade and related matters which they are publishing in accordance with the requirement set up by the provisions of Article X:1 of the General Agreement. Furthermore, the centre shall seek information in this regard from other sources, including information available from such institutions as Chambers of Commerce and Industry. In order to facilitate the exchange of market research studies and, more generally, the possibility for less-developed countries to obtain advice and assistance through the established trade information services of industrialized countries, Committee III might wish to consider drawing up a recommendation to this effect to the CONTRACTING PARTIES.

1See also the note relating to the notification requirements in the GATT in Annex B, page . The text of Article X:1 is as follows: "Laws, regulations, judicial decisions and administrative rulings of general application, made effective by any contracting party, pertaining to the classification or the valuation of products for customs purposes, or to rates of duty, taxes or other charges, or to requirements, restrictions or prohibitions on imports or exports or on the transfer of payments therefor, or affecting their sale, distribution, transportation, insurance, warehousing, inspection, exhibition, processing, mixing or other use, shall be published promptly in such a manner as to enable governments and traders to become acquainted with them. Agreements affecting international trade policy which are in force between the government or a governmental agency of any contracting party and the government or governmental agency of any other contracting party shall also be published. The provisions of this paragraph shall not require any contracting party to disclose confidential information which would impede law enforcement or otherwise be contrary to the public interest or would prejudice the legitimate commercial interest of particular enterprises, public or private."
(ii) the establishment of a "documents centre." The centre would collect, and have available for consultation, information on all subjects selected by the Group or suggested by Committee III or by governments as particularly suited for coverage by the trade information centre. Lists of information available at the centre would be circulated from time to time since the material to be collected by the centre will form the basis of much of the work of the information services it is particularly important that the centre would receive the full co-operation of governments in obtaining the required documents.

The Group noted that under present practices much of the information supplied by governments to the secretariat is restricted. To make certain that this material can be used to the greatest extent possible, Committee III may wish to consider the drawing up of a recommendation for adoption by the CONTRACTING PARTIES, inviting governments when transmitting information of relevance to the centre, to indicate whether or not information may be used by the centre;

(iii) publication of a register of all sources of trade information (in co-operation with governments and such organizations as the International Chamber of Commerce); and provision of assistance in locating fruitful sources of trade information for example under the correspondence answering service under (iv) below;

(iv) provision of a correspondence answering service to supply, on request, information on such subjects as trade barriers, trade regulations as well as market opportunities and market requirements for products exported from less-developed countries. To the extent possible, the correspondence answering service would be based on information available at the centre. In certain instances, it might become necessary however, to refer enquiries to national research or trade promotion offices. As regards enquiries referred to member governments the Group felt that specific procedures may have to be adopted in this respect. The matter could be taken up again at the next meeting.
While keeping in mind the objective of providing a service to exporters which would operate in the most direct manner with a minimum of delay, the Group felt that at least in the initial stage of the centre's operation, some screening process for the use of the correspondence facility would have to be employed, to keep the work which might arise for the centre within manageable proportions. At the same time, it was not intended to limit recourse to what might become one of the most valuable services of the centre. The Group expects to return to this question at its next meeting.

(v) provision to be made for the resuscitation of the publication "International Trade News Bulletin" (discontinued in 1959), in a form specially designed to meet the trade needs of less-developed countries. In the first instance the publication might appear bi-monthly. Thereafter, it might be published more frequently. To ensure that the publication will give due weight of the special needs of the less-developed countries, the Group expect to take up again, at its next meeting, the question of the most suitable form for this publication, account being taken of experience gained from the first issues.

12. Among the matters to be taken up at the next meeting of the Group, is the question of other publications which the centre may wish to issue, notably, the exports' handbook and any supplementary booklets. In regard to these publications, the expert from Brazil emphasized that notwithstanding the usefulness of the other measures which had been proposed for adoption, it would be necessary for the centre to publish a "handbook" containing information of a more permanent nature. The coverage of the handbook could gradually be expanded but, in any event, it was not envisaged that it would cover every detail. Rather, it would be the purpose of this publication to make available in an easily assimilable form data of direct relevance to
exporters in less-developed countries, selected from the large amount of material which had already been collected or was being published elsewhere. Furthermore, there was need for the dissemination of information relating to particular markets through the publication of supplementary booklets. Finally, matters of current interest would have to be brought to the notice of exporters, for example, through the International Trade News Bulletin. To be really useful, however, this publication would also have to bring the "handbook" up to date. It would have to be regarded as a supplement to the basic handbook or handbooks, containing the "core" of the permanent information. It could thus not be a substitute for the handbook. Should the services undertaken by GATT in the field of trade information and promotion fail to provide for certain minimum requirements in the publication of essential information, particularly information already available, they would fall short of the attainment of the objective of international co-operation in this realm, in the light of the requirements of less-developed countries, as expressed in the original Brazilian proposal.

13. The Group agreed that the question of the type and form of publications which the centre should issue could not be considered in isolation. While further consideration of this matter would seem necessary, the Group thought that useful results would be obtained if the centre would concentrate, in the first instance, on those subjects for which there appeared to exist a demand in many less-developed countries, as noted in paragraph 12 of Annex B, but that, to the extent possible, items in the next lower category of priority would also be taken up. Moreover, the service should be focussed on those areas and commodities which had already been identified by Committee III as being of special export interest to less-developed countries. The Group took note, in this connexion, of a number of activities in Committee III, particularly the programme of country studies (see COM.III/118 and Add.1 and L/2080, Section III) and the examination of a further list of products (L/2080, Section II), which could be expected to provide a considerable amount
of information which would be of direct interest to exporters in less-developed countries. The Group recommended that arrangements be made promptly to make relevant material which emerged from this work available through the centre.

14. To make the operations of the centre more effective it was proposed that contracting parties would nominate an officer who would keep in contact with the centre and could himself be contacted to provide information on the availability of trade promotion facilities in his country. Furthermore, it might be useful for the centre to establish contact with such agencies or institutions as national Chambers of Commerce which could act as local representatives of the centre. The Group agreed that possibilities for action along the lines suggested above should be explored by the centre.

15. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Group also gave consideration to the financial implications of establishing and operating trade information and trade promotion advisory services, of the kind suggested above.

To facilitate the task of the Expert Group, the secretariat had prepared a tentative estimate of the likely cost of operating certain services in the field of trade information and trade promotion advisory services (Spec(64)20). The secretariat note made a distinction between the expenses likely to be incurred in the first year and in the second year at which time the centre would come into full operation. As regards the first year the note assumed the following steps: (a) establishment of a documents centre; (b) publication of the "International Trade News Bulletin" on a bi-monthly basis; (c) publication of a register of all sources of trade information; (d) preparation for issue, at a later date of other publications suggested for the centre. In addition, the note assumed that to a limited extent a correspondence-answering service would be provided and that some of the material being prepared for publication might be made available in a provisional form. The cost of these services was tentatively assumed to be of the order of magnitude of $60,000, or if trade promotion advisory services were also to be rendered of approximately $70,000 during the first year. The estimate was based on the assumption that
certain costs, such as office accommodation and use of common facilities and services, could temporarily be absorbed in the general budget and that the maximum operation could be obtained from governments in the supply of documentation. The staff requirements in the secretariat note were estimated at four officers and two general category staff for the first year, to increase to seven officers (including two translators) and four general category staff in the second year. The note also contained certain assumption for the financing of the trade information and trade promotion advisory services through income from subscriptions (to be guaranteed by governments).

16. Having in mind the different range of services which were proposed by the Group, to be provided during the initial phase of the centre's operation, the secretariat estimates, which in any event had only been presented as indicators of the general order of magnitude involved, would have to undergo some modification. Overall, it might be assumed that the cost of establishing and operating the centre would not be less than given in the secretariat's estimates above, but that it could be kept to an amount approximately of the order of magnitude referred to above, at least during the first year. Taking account of the range of services to be provided, the Group felt that costs of this order of magnitude would not be excessive.

To be followed by two Annexes: A. List of Experts participating in the meeting
B. COM.III/126